

*Remarks of Kara Hennessey  
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For the education Committee  
On Senate Bill 24  
Teacher Certification and Evaluation

March 12, 2012

Senator Stillman, and Representative Fleischmann and members of the Education Committee as a fifth grade teacher in Willington, I would like to share my views with you about Senate Bill 24 regarding teacher certification and evaluation. I have been a teacher for seven years, and I love my career and working with students every day. I work long hours, 10 or more hours a day, and that is okay because I know that I am doing it for my students and their success. With Governor Malloy's current education bill, I believe he is devaluing me and my profession as a whole. Governor Malloy currently believes the best way to improve education in our state is to introduce a new teacher evaluation program that relies on subjective administrative reviews and state standardized testing. This is a huge concern to me. I understand the need to create an evaluation that can be used to assess all teachers across the state, but I do not believe in tying the evaluation so closely to standardized testing.

There are so many factors that affect the results of that testing, and because a student is not necessarily successful on that test, does not mean that the teacher is not a strong teacher, or that the student is not learning. Some students have severe test taking anxiety. Other students are special education students and that may, and typically does, impact their performance. Some students might just have an off day, maybe because they are feeling unwell, and under perform. How can one set of tests decide the effectiveness of a teacher in educating students? The testing is a snapshot taken over two weeks, not a picture of what goes on in that classroom over 180 days. There needs to be a structure put in place for evaluation that takes into account the effort, instruction, and time that a teacher puts forth towards their students on a daily basis.

I understand Governor Malloy is attempting to address these areas by including a teacher evaluation completed by an administrator as part of the evaluative process. My concern with this type of evaluation is that it can be very subjective. On many occasions I have observed poor interactions between an administrator and a staff member, and then consequently that teacher receives lower marks, and that teacher is a very competent educator. There needs to be a way that teachers can be evaluated that takes out the subjectivity, and I don't believe that this proposal has accomplished that goal yet.

In addition to our evaluation process being altered, our certification process is also changing. The new structure of the certifications will not motivate teachers to continue to grow as educators and gain advanced degrees because there is no longer any incentive to get a master's degree. I believe Governor Malloy's purpose behind this education bill is to improve and create better education in our school systems; this is not going to achieve that goal. Education is a field that is constantly changing and evolving, and teachers need to be motivated as well as expected to continue to grow and learn through advanced degrees and courses to keep a high standard of education.

It is my hope that you will not pass this bill as proposed, and that as representatives you will push for changes to this bill that will keep teachers in mind. Most of the teachers I know are very dedicated to their craft, and are constantly putting in 110% effort, and they need to be recognized for all that they do. I know that changes need to be made to education, but let's not go for the quick fix, let's take some time to research and find the BEST fix.